

Week Ending Friday, March 20, 1998

The President's Radio Address

March 14, 1998

Good morning. This is a time of great promise for America, and it should be a time of great achievement as we work to strengthen our Nation for the 21st century.

There are only 68 work days remaining in the congressional session. Yet, we still have a lot of work to do: maintaining fiscal discipline by setting aside any budget surplus until we save Social Security first, protecting our children with comprehensive tobacco legislation, strengthening families with the Patient's Bill of Rights and child care legislation, honoring our parents by letting more people buy into Medicare, improving education with higher standards and smaller classes and more funds to build and repair schools, preserving our environment with a new clean water initiative and incentives to have new technologies meet the challenge of global warming.

This is a full agenda for the future of our Nation. But we must act now—not over the next 68 days but right now, in the next several days—to advance our security around the world and rebuild communities hit by natural disasters here at home.

I have asked Congress for an emergency bill to fund these pressing security and natural disaster needs. Here's what's at stake. The measure will pay for the deployment of America's Armed Forces in and around the Persian Gulf. Our Armed Forces must stand watch to make sure Saddam Hussein allows inspectors to detect and destroy his capacity for nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. As long as Saddam Hussein continues to pose a threat, we must remain vigilant.

The measure would also pay our long-standing debt to the United Nations at a time when that organization continues to play a critical role in forcing Iraq to yield and in supporting peace and progress throughout the world. I don't think any American be-

lieves that America shouldn't pay its dues to the U.N.

The emergency measure will also support the brave men and women of our Armed Forces as they continue to help democracy and peace take root in Bosnia. It will promote our national economic security as well, supporting the International Monetary Fund as it reduces the harm to America's economy from the financial turmoil in Asia.

Perhaps most important of all, we need emergency action to help millions of families whose lives have been turned upside down by the natural disasters in the winter of 1998. Communities in California, New England, Florida, and Guam have seen flooding, ice, mud slides, and the savage force of El Niño. I visited with many of these families; I've seen how hard they're struggling. Our national community must help them. This emergency measure will rebuild roads, repair military bases, prevent future flooding, help family farmers, and help families in distress.

Now, these emergency measures are vital to the national interest. They have broad bipartisan support. But unfortunately, some in Congress are preparing to slip unrelated, controversial provisions into the bill—proposals guaranteed to produce gridlock and delay. One provision is a controversial issue related to family planning. Another would even block the Federal Communications Commission from offering candidates free TV air time which would cut the cost of campaigns and reduce special interest influence. Now, it's bad enough that Congress won't pass campaign financial reform; now some in Congress want to stamp it out anywhere it sees it.

These unrelated issues, whatever side you have on them, absolutely have no place on emergency legislation. Congress shouldn't hold emergency aid for families hostage to controversial provisions. Congress shouldn't demand ransom to maintain America's world

leadership and meet America's responsibility to our own national security.

Last year, when Congress tried to attach partisan measures to similar disaster legislation, I said, no. Congress would be unwise to head down that same road again. Instead, let's work together to enact a straightforward emergency measure. No unacceptable provisions, no political gimmicks. Let's work together to meet the long-term needs of our families, our economy, our Nation. If we will once again put aside partisanship, reject narrow agendas, and focus on the national interest, the remaining 68 days of this congressional session can be a time of real achievement for our people and our future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:38 p.m. on March 13 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 14.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders on
the Enlargement of the North
Atlantic Treaty Organization**
March 14, 1998

Dear Mr. Leader:

The Senate will soon act on the proposed accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I want to thank you for the energetic and bipartisan leadership that you, Democratic Leader Daschle and many others have demonstrated on this historic initiative. The enlargement of NATO directly will benefit America's security, and I urge all members of the Senate to support its ratification.

The addition of these countries to NATO is an essential part of our effort to consolidate the stability and security that resulted from the end of the Cold War. The Alliance's enlargement will make America safer by making NATO stronger, adding new forces and new allies that can share our security burdens. NATO's core mission will remain the collective defense of the territory of its members, and neither the addition of new members nor NATO's other adaptations to Europe's new security environment will change that.

The accession of these three countries also will help make Europe more stable; already the prospect of membership has encouraged states throughout the region to accelerate reforms, resolve disputes, and improve cooperation. In addition, adding these states to NATO—combined with other efforts to reach out to all of the region's new democracies—will help to erase the Cold War dividing line and contribute to our strategic goal of building an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe.

The addition of these states to NATO, which will yield tremendous benefits to our own security, is also affordable. After extensive review of this proposal by NATO, our Administration, and the Congress, we now have strong basis to believe that the costs to the U.S. will be about \$400 million for the United States over the next ten years, and that the total costs will be equitably shared with our current and new allies.

There are other steps we will need to take together in order to help ensure the security of the transatlantic area. We are moving ahead with efforts to increase cooperation with the Russian Federation and to build on the openings for constructive dialogue created by the NATO–Russia Founding Act. I am committed to continue efforts with Russia and other countries to reduce our nuclear stockpiles, combat the dangers of proliferation, and stabilize arms levels across Europe. We must continue working together to create the opportunity for a lasting peace in Bosnia and the Balkans. We will continue working with the European Union, which also is adding members, and which makes its own important contribution to Europe's stability.

NATO is the cornerstone of our transatlantic security efforts, however, and the Alliance is proving its value—through the Partnership for Peace program and many other efforts—in projecting stability throughout Europe. For that same reason, we must leave the door open to the addition of other qualified new members in the future. The “open door” commitment made by all the allies has played a vital role in ensuring that the process of enlargement benefits the security of the entire region, not just these first three new members.